

# A Guide to the Park

The following guide, keyed to the map below, highlights major sites within the park.

- 1

**Confederate Monument** Confederate soldiers were hastily buried on the battlefield after the surrender. The exact location of their graves is unknown. This monument commemorates the Southern soldiers who fought and died at Fort Donelson. The United Daughters of the Confederacy erected the monument in 1933.
- 2

**Fort Donelson** Confederate soldiers and slaves built this 15-acre earthen fort over a period of seven months, using axes and shovels to make a wall of logs and earth 10 feet high. While a more permanent fort of brick or stone would have been more desirable, earthen walls were much quicker to build. Properly constructed earthworks can provide better protection than brick or stone. The fort's purpose was to protect the Cumberland River batteries from land attack. At the time of the battle, all trees within 200 yards of the fort were felled, clearing fields of fire and observation. The branches of these trees were sharpened and laid around the outside of the fort to form an obstacle called an *abatis*.
- 3

**Log Huts** Soldiers and slaves built more than 400 log huts as winter quarters for the soldiers garrisoning and working on the fort. In addition to government rations of flour, fresh and cured meat, sugar, and coffee, every boat brought boxes from home filled with all kinds of things a farm or store could provide. Off-duty soldiers from the local area hunted and fished in the same locations they had frequented a few short months before as civilians. Sometime after the surrender, Federals burned the cabins because of a measles outbreak.
- 4

**River Batteries** The rivers were vital arteries that flowed directly through the Confederate heartland. Transportation and supply routes depended heavily on these waterways. Both the upper river battery and the lower river battery were armed with heavy seacoast artillery to defend the water approach to major supply bases in Clarksville and Nashville, Tenn. It was here that untested Confederate gunners defeated Flag Officer Andrew Foote's flotilla of ironclad and timberclad gunboats. Using the same tactics that were successful at Fort Henry, Foote brought his gunboats very close, hoping to shell the batteries into submission. Instead the slow-moving vessels became excellent targets for the Confederate guns, which seriously damaged the gunboats and wounded many sailors. Foote, who was one of those wounded in the exchange, later told a newspaper reporter that he had taken part in numerous engagements with forts and ships "but never was under so severe a fire before." The roar of this land-naval battle was heard 35 miles away.
- 5

**Buckner's Final Defense** After the Confederate breakout attempt, Grant ordered Gen. C. F. Smith to attack the far right flank of the Southern lines. Smith's troops, facing a weakened Confederate position due to the shifting of Buckner's division to support the breakout attempt, drove the 30th Tennessee back to this ridge. The regiment held this position until reinforced by Buckner's troops and the fort's garri-

- son. Although the southerners still held the ridge, Smith retained a solid hold on the Confederate right flank.

6

**Jackson's Battery** Ordered to support the Confederate right wing, Jackson's four-gun battery moved to this position on the night of the 13th. It was held in reserve here throughout the following day. Early on the morning of the 15th, the battery was ordered to the Wynn Ferry Road sector to assist with the attempted breakout.

7

**Smith's Attack** Grant correctly concluded that for the Confederates to hit so hard on the right, they must have weakened their line somewhere else. Seizing the initiative, he told General Smith to "take Fort Donelson." Smith had his troops uncap their guns (so the men would not be tempted to stop and fire, risking greater casualties) and fix bayonets. With the Second Iowa Infantry spearheading the attack, Smith led the assault against the Confederate lines on this ridge. Smith's division captured and held the earthworks, controlling this position on the night of the 15th. Before the attack could be renewed the next morning, Grant and Buckner were already discussing terms for surrender.

8

**French's Battery** In conjunction with Maney's Battery to the west, the four-gun battery emplaced here was intended to prevent Union forces from attacking down Erin Hollow and penetrating the Fort Donelson perimeter.

9

**Forge Road** At daybreak on February 15, Pillow and Johnson's division, along with Col. Nathan B. Forrest's cavalry, attacked Gen. John A. McClelland's troops on the Union right flank in an attempt to secure an escape route. The attack succeeded in briefly opening the Forge Road as an avenue of escape but, due to indecision and confusion among their commanders, the Confederate troops were ordered to return to their entrenchments. The Union soldiers were allowed to reoccupy the area the southerners had fought so hard to control.

10

**Dover Hotel** Built between 1851 and 1853, this building accommodated riverboat travelers before and after the Civil War. General Buckner and his staff used the hotel as their headquarters during the battle. It also served as a Union hospital after the surrender. After Buckner accepted Grant's surrender terms, the two generals met here to work out the details. Lew Wallace, the first Union general to reach the hotel following the surrender, did not want his men to gloat over the Confederate situation and told Capt. Frederick Knefler, one of his officers, to tell the brigade commanders "to move the whole line forward, and take possession of persons and property . . . [but] not a word of taunt—no cheering." An estimated 13,000 Confederate soldiers were loaded onto transports to begin their journey to Northern prisoner-of-war camps. Neither the Union nor Confederate governments was prepared to care for the large influx of prisoners. The Fort Donelson prisoners were incarcerated in hastily converted and ill-prepared sites in Illinois, Indiana,
- Ohio, and as far away as Boston, Mass. Fort Donelson POWs suffered more from the northern climate than any other hardship. In September 1862 most of the Fort Donelson prisoners were exchanged.

On two occasions, once in mid-1862 and again in February 1863, Confederate forces tried to drive the Federal troops from the area. Both attempts failed; but the second, led by soldiers under the command of Gens. Joseph Wheeler and Nathan Bedford Forrest, cost the town its future. That skirmish, known as the Battle of Dover, resulted in the destruction of all but four of the town's buildings. One of those to survive was the Dover Hotel, which remained in business until the 1930s. It has been restored through the efforts of the Fort Donelson House Historical Association and the National Park Service. The exterior looks much the same as it did when the surrender took place.

11

**National Cemetery** In 1863, after the Battle of Dover, the Union garrison rebuilt its fortifications. Diary accounts left by soldiers of the 83rd Illinois Regiment, stationed here after the Battle of Fort Donelson, explain how demanding soldiering could be. Besides working on the new fortifications, the garrison protected the Union supply line. Soldiers frequently commented on the constant threat of attacks by guerrilla parties. Sgt. Maj. Thomas J. Baugh wrote in 1863 that the "rebels [had] been trying to blockade the river" again. Pvt. Mitchell Thompson, who was often detailed to repair Union telegraph lines, described the area as being filled with "rebel bands of thieves and robbers."

Slaves began coming into the Union lines soon after the victory in 1862, seeking shelter, food, and protection. The issue of how to deal with the large influx of slaves who were still considered property by the slave owners and individual state laws presented a problem for both the Union army and the Lincoln administration. In 1862 Grant chose to protect the slaves and put them to work for the army. Eventually freedmen camps were established across Tennessee, and it is estimated that approximately 300 slaves wintered at Fort Donelson in 1862. The army employed men as laborers and teamsters, while women commonly served as cooks and laundresses. In 1863 the Union army also began recruiting free blacks from Tennessee and Kentucky.

Soon after the war, this site was selected for the establishment of the Fort Donelson National Cemetery and the remains of 670 Union soldiers were reinterred here. These soldiers had been buried on the battlefield, in local cemeteries, in hospital cemeteries, and in nearby towns. The large number of unknown soldiers—512—can be attributed to haste in cleaning up the battlefield and to the fact that Civil War soldiers did not carry government-issued identification. Today the national cemetery contains both Civil War veterans and veterans who have served the United States since that time. Many spouses and dependent children are also buried here.
- The map illustrates the Fort Donelson National Battlefield and its surroundings. Key features include:

  - Waterways:** Hickman Creek, Indian Creek, Lake Barkley (historic Cumberland River), Dyers Creek, and Lick Creek.
  - Fortifications:** Fort Donelson, Jackson's Battery, French's Battery, Maney's Battery, Porter's Battery, and various river batteries (Lower and Upper).
  - Historical Sites:** Confederate Monument, Log Huts, Visitor Center, and the Dover Hotel (Surrender House).
  - Geographical Features:** Erin Hollow, Sandy Road, and the Donelson Trail.
  - Infrastructure:** Roads like Wynn Ferry Road, Forge Road, and Donelson Parkway; and streets in Dover like Church Street and Main Street.
  - Tour Routes:** Indicated by solid blue lines with numbered stops (1-11). Interpretive trails are shown as dashed green lines.
  - Legend:** Red lines for Confederate earthworks, grey lines for earthworks that no longer exist, blue lines for tour routes, and dashed green lines for interpretive trails.
  - Scale and Orientation:** A north arrow and scale bars in kilometers (0 to 0.3) and miles (0 to 0.3) are provided.